

Nigel Russell

Weston Prince



Ralph Crump

Roddy Carlson

Getting a band off the ground in New Zealand has never been an easy affair, and Danse Macabre have definitely had their share of set-backs.

Originally called the Sloth Creatures, they consisted of Weston Prince on guitar, Tony Ryan on bass, Roddy Carlson on drums and Grant Latimer on vocals. About August 1980, they changed their name to Kadets and began playing support gigs. One of the first was with the ready-to-implode Spelling Mistakes. Nigel Russell, then bassist with the Mistakes, was impressed by the Kadets' tightness, and when Grant headed south, he applied for the job of vocalist. In came a small synthesiser, and Danse Macabre were born. Their first gig was as support to the Pop Mx in December 1980.

Internal strife led to the addition of Ralph Crump on bass, whose fluid, almost funky rhythms have done a lot to help

Danse Macabre develop into the tight, go-ahead unit they are now.

"Getting the synth was the first big move towards a different direction," says Weston. "Up to then, we had been playing pretty heavy music that was assaulting people's ears. What we are trying to achieve now is music that involves melody and power as opposed to volume and power. The atmospheric side of our music is only a small part of it. A lot of people accuse us of jumping on the latest band wagon, but essentially we are playing our own music the way we like it. At the same time, we are trying to do something we think people would want to hear."

How do they feel about accusations made against them of being derivative?

"I don't think we are half as derivative as a band like the

Newmatics. At least we haven't played anything as directly commercial as ska ..."

Nigel interrupts. "The Newmatics have moved away from that ska sound now, and are developing a sound that is more their own. Every band has to have a starting point."

Out soon will be Danse Macabre's 12-inch EP. Recorded at Mandrill under the direction of Glynn Tucker, it features four songs ('Torch', 'Conditioner', 'Between The Lines' and 'ECG').

How did they find working with Glynn Tucker?

"We really enjoyed it," says Weston. "I think why some young bands don't achieve the sound they want is principally their own fault. We co-produced the record with Trevor Reekie, and I think that is the deciding factor. You have to learn to make demands in the studio, or you don't achieve anything."

"When Glynn heard our demos he didn't really like them, but Trevor dragged him along to see us play one night. After that, he seemed to gain a greater realisation of what we were about, and he couldn't do enough to help us."

Are the songs on the EP the ones they originally intended to do?

"We were going to do 'Ancient Monuments'," offers Nigel, "But Glynn was pushing for 'ECG'. We did 'Ancient Monuments' on the first demo, then on the second we did a couple of takes, and Glynn suggested 'ECG'. The first take went so well, we decided to keep it. Most of the EP was first takes. We did the whole thing in forty hours, and there were very few overdubs, although there is backwards guitar on 'ECG'."

"We really enjoy being in the studio," says Weston, "but unless you own your own, you can't really spend all your time recording. A lot of bands can get around it by recording on 4 or 8-track, but I think our material demands a much bigger sound."

"The EP was recorded on 16-track," says Roddy. "Then it was mixed down on 24. I think that's probably about right for what we want."

Nigel agrees. "The songs on the EP needed the space we were able to afford by using the big desk."

Are the band likely to do more live gigs?

"There is only so much you can do in New Zealand. I think we will have to explore more avenues of performance. As far as pubs go, I don't think we'll play any more than we have done over the last year."

Were they upset at the way South Island audiences reacted on their tour?

"I think a lot of people didn't know what to expect in Christchurch," says Weston. "Most of them seemed to be under the impression we were some sort of blitz band, which of course was totally wrong. We played the Gladstone, which is very much the punk venue. Next time we will do the Hillsborough, where at least they have an open mind. You just can't even contemplate playing funk-based songs to people at the Gladstone."

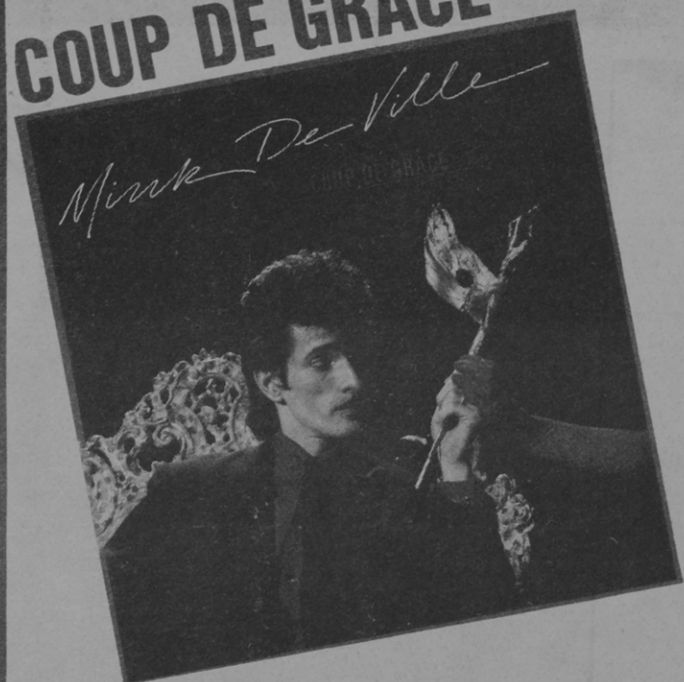
With the growing migration to Australia, the biggest bands in the country are not necessarily the well-established ones. Danse Macabre must surely benefit. They have the songs, the ability and a strength of direction that in the coming year must see them emerge as one of the top live and recording acts. Listen to the EP, you won't be disappointed.

Mark Phillips

Photos by Steve Robinson

MINK DEVILLE

COUP DE GRÂCE



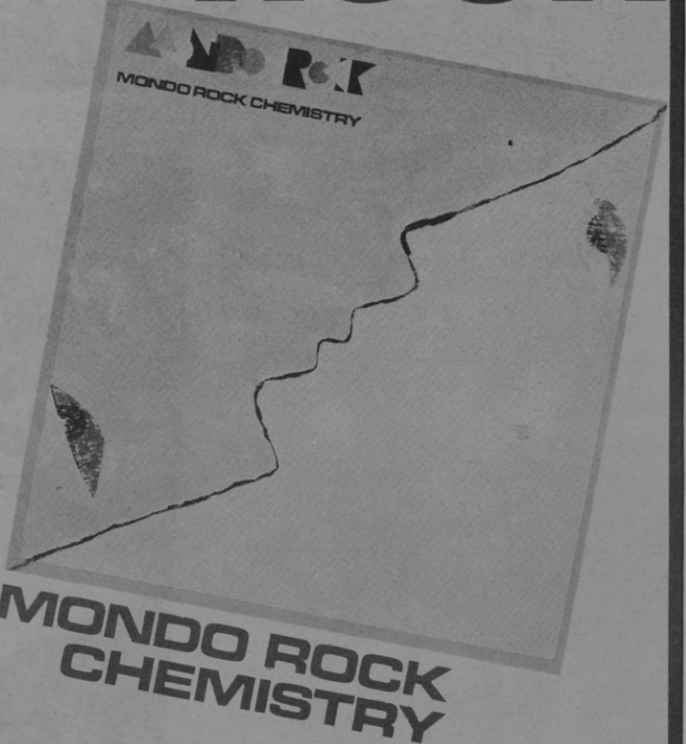
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MONDO ROCK



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